

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-19. (Canceled)

20. (New) A gaming communications system, comprising:

a first independent gaming network adapted to provide a first common functionality to a plurality of gaming machines;

a second independent gaming network adapted to provide a second common functionality to a plurality of gaming machines, said second independent gaming network being independent and disparate from said first independent gaming network; and

a gaming machine network in communication with each of said first and second independent gaming networks, said gaming machine network having:

a host communication device adapted to process data to and from each of said first and second independent gaming networks along a single communication path including gaming machines within said gaming machine network,

a plurality of gaming machines arranged along said single communication path, each said gaming machine including a communication interface adapted to facilitate communications between said first and second independent gaming networks and various disparate peripheral devices within said gaming machine without said communications being processed through any main processing unit of said gaming machine, and

a plurality of communication links adapted to provide communications along said single communication path between said host communication device and each of said plurality of gaming machines.

21. (New) The gaming communications system of claim 20, wherein one or more of said plurality of communication links comprise fiber optic links.

22. (New) The gaming communications system of claim 20, wherein said host communication device and said plurality of gaming machines are arranged in a closed communication loop, and wherein said single communication path consists of a single communication link between each host communication device and/or gaming machine in said closed communication loop.

23. (New) The gaming communications system of claim 20, wherein each said gaming machine communication interface includes one or more physical connections adapted to facilitate communications along at least one of said plurality of communication links, a packet transmitter configured to transmit data to at least one of said plurality of communication links and a packet receiver configured to receive data from at least one of said plurality of communication links, and an interface between said packet transmitter and packet receiver and at least one peripheral device within said gaming machine.

24. (New) The gaming communications system of claim 23, wherein said first independent gaming network comprises a player tracking network and said first common functionality comprises player tracking with respect to all system gaming machines.

25. (New) The gaming communications system of claim 24, wherein one of said disparate peripheral devices comprises a player tracking device.

26. (New) The gaming communications system of claim 24, wherein said second independent gaming network comprises a progressive award network and said second common functionality comprises progressive jackpot services with respect to all system gaming machines.

27. (New) The gaming communications system of claim 20, further including:

a third independent gaming network adapted to provide a third common functionality to a plurality of gaming machines, said third independent gaming network being independent and disparate from said first and second independent gaming networks.

28. (New) The gaming communications system of claim 27, wherein said first independent gaming network comprises a player tracking network, wherein said second independent gaming network comprises a progressive award network, and wherein said third independent gaming network comprises a security monitoring network.

29. (New) The gaming communications system of claim 28, wherein said security monitoring network and one or more of said communication interfaces for said plurality of gaming machines each include a backup power supply, wherein items having a backup power supply remain operational when main power is shut off or lost to the remainder of said gaming communications system.

30. (New) A gaming machine network adapted to facilitate communications with each of a plurality of independent gaming networks, comprising:

a host communication device adapted to process data to and from each of said plurality of independent gaming networks along a single communication path including gaming machines within said gaming machine network;

a plurality of gaming machines arranged along said single communication path, each said gaming machines including a communication interface adapted to facilitate communications between each of said plurality of independent gaming networks and various disparate peripheral devices within said gaming machine without said communications being processed through any main processing unit of said gaming machine, and

a plurality of communication links adapted to provide communications along said single communication path between said host communication device and each of said plurality of gaming machines.

31. (New) The gaming machine network of claim 30, wherein one or more of said plurality of communication links comprise fiber optic links.

32. (New) The gaming machine network of claim 30, wherein said host communication device and said plurality of gaming machines are arranged in a closed communication loop, and wherein said single communication path consists of a single communication link between each host communication device and/or gaming machine in said closed communication loop.

33. (New) The gaming machine network of claim 30, wherein each said gaming machine communication interface includes one or more physical connections adapted to facilitate communications along at least one of said plurality of communication links, a packet transmitter

configured to transmit data to at least one of said plurality of communication links and a packet receiver configured to receive data from at least one of said plurality of communication links, and an interface between said packet transmitter and packet receiver and at least one peripheral device within said gaming machine.

34. (New) The gaming machine network of claim 33, wherein a first independent gaming network of said plurality of independent gaming networks comprises a player tracking network.

35. (New) The gaming machine network of claim 34, wherein one of said disparate peripheral devices comprises a player tracking device.

36. (New) The gaming machine network of claim 34, wherein a second independent gaming network of said plurality of independent gaming networks comprises a progressive award network.

37. (New) The gaming machine network of claim 36, wherein a third independent gaming network of said plurality of independent gaming networks comprises a security monitoring network.